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The compulsive Mr. Casey

Documents released on the financial holdings of William J. Casey, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, make one worrisome fact quite clear: The man controlling this country's foreign intelligence network is himself controlled. Mr. Casey is in the grip of a compulsive drive to make money on the stock market. Apparently he will let nothing get in its way—not a sense of duty, not agreements publicly made, certainly not any restraining tugs of conscience or worries about public opinion. The Casey bank balance comes first.

The new documents were obtained through a lawsuit based on the Freedom of Information Act. They disclose that Mr. Casey, after taking over as head of the CIA, acquired stock in companies that do business with the agency. They also show that he had stock in firms with classified CIA contacts when he took office in January, 1981, and has since retained stock in companies with CIA contracts both classified and unclassified.

Mr. Casey's obsessive feelings about money were plain long before the new documents were released. Of all senior administration officials with access to secret economic information, he alone refused to give up control of his own holdings. President Reagan, Vice President Bush, and the heads of the State, Justice and

Treasury Departments all put their stock portfolios into a blind trust; so did Mr. Casey's last two predecessors at the CIA. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger sold off his stock in companies doing major business with the Pentagon.

Until quite recently, however, Mr. Casey wouldn't let his multi-million dollar holdings out of his sight. Instead, the CIA set up an elaborate screening system intended to make sure he didn't make decisions that would substantially affect his investments. Within the last few weeks, under severe congressional pressure, he did put his holdings in a blind trust.

Presumably Mr. Casey and administration officials think that solves the problem. It doesn't. The problem is Mr. Casey, and the only solution is the one applied to former Interior Secretary James Watt. It is to get rid of him as a drag and an embarrassment to this administration.

A man who finds it so hard to put national responsibility ahead of private profit should not have the choice. And if that fact admits of any degrees, it is especially true of the CIA director. Intelligence is a commodity vital to this nation; it shouldn't have to be filtered through all those dollar signs.